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THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY ENVIRONMENT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL  
SEPARATION IN LATE ADOLESCENCE

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
in  
Psychology

---

by  
Steve Bo  
November 1991

THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY ENVIRONMENT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL  
SEPARATION IN LATE ADOLESCENCE

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by


Steve Bo

November 1991

Approved by:

  
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of the family social environment and an individuals' locus of control in relation to psychological separation in late adolescent females. The sample consisted of 75 18- to 23- year old females who completed a questionnaire assessing psychological separation (Psychological Separation Inventory), the family social climate (Family Environmental Scale), and the personality characteristic of locus of control (Internal versus External Locus of Control). The results of correlational and stepwise multiple regression analyses indicated that some of the hypothesized relationships were significant. There was a positive relationship between the subscale of Cohesion and Expressiveness, and Conflictual Independence. This suggests that families that are supportive and helpful, and encourage its members to act openly and express feelings directly will have adolescent females who experience less anxiety, guilt, anger, resentment, and responsibility. Also, a significant negative relationship was found between Conflict, Cohesion (for mother), Control, and Conflictual Independence. This suggests that adolescents who perceive their families as being highly conflicted and use excessive rules and procedures to run their families will experience more guilt, anxiety, anger, resentment, and responsibility. Also, females who come from supportive and helpful families will experience more guilt, anger, anxiety, resentment, and responsibility in regard to mother. Lastly, a significant negative relationship existed between Cohesion and Emotional Independence which suggested that supportive and helpful families will have females that are still in need of the parents provision of closeness,



emotional support, and encouragement during the separation stage of late adolescence. In general, the conclusion that the family interaction patterns do play an important role in the separation process in late-adolescence was supported. Limitations of this study and suggestions for further study are discussed.

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## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is viewed as a critical developmental stage that affects functioning throughout the adult life-span. The springboard that bridges the gap between adolescence and adulthood is the separation process that occurs in late adolescence from one's primary caretakers. Theoretical literature abounds on this subject but empirical studies have been relatively sparse. The purpose of this study was to examine family interaction variables that may enhance or impede this important process. More specifically, this study will explore the relation between psychological separation of late adolescent females from their family and the interacting family characteristics and the adolescent's locus of control.

### Separation

Psychological separation from one's parents during late adolescence is thought to be an important developmental task affecting both personality structure and personal adjustment (Hoffman, 1984). This issue is also clinically viewed as critical to late adolescent adjustment (Bloom, 1980), and has been linked conceptually to the emergence of emotional and behavioral problems in young adults who have experienced separation failures (Haley, 1979; Meyer, 1980). Furthermore, Douvan and Adelson (1966) state that the separation process of adolescents from their parents is an universal phenomenon. However, in light of the importance that this separation process has on adult functioning, relatively few studies have been conducted to examine this transition which occurs in late adolescence and early adulthood (Hoffman, 1984; Hoffman & Weiss, 1987; Moore, 1987; Moore & Hotch, 1981, 1983; Sullivan & Sullivan, 1980; Teyber, 1983). Why

some adolescents appear to separate with ease from their family of origin while the same developmental process is more difficult for others remains unclear. This proposed research will use both a psychoanalytic and family systems orientation to explore some of the factors involved in the separation process.

### Theoretical Conceptions on Adolescent Separation

Psychoanalytic theory views adolescent individuation as a central task in healthy adjustment in later life (Blos, 1979; Schafer, 1973). Freud (1962) viewed the adolescent individuation process as a developmental continuum which fluctuates between the attachment of infancy to that of an individual's mastery over internal (intrapsychic) and external (relational) experiences. The separating adolescent in this continuum will grow from dependency to an increasing control and mastery of life's experiences. Blos (1967), in light of this developmental continuum, views the separation of adolescents as the second individuation process, the first being the separation that takes place during the first three years of life when the child fluctuates between symbiotic attachment and individuation with their primary caretakers (e.g., Mahler, 1975). Blos (1962) suggests that the infant who "hatches" from a symbiotic union with mother to become an individuated toddler parallels the adolescent who grows from family dependencies to become an adult. He also suggests that the separating adolescent will take increasingly more responsibility for his or her actions rather than holding the primary caretakers accountable.

Conceptualizing the dynamics of an individual who is transitioning from adolescence and becoming an adult can be understood, in part, by

using control-mastery theory. Proponents of control-mastery theory (an offshoot of psychoanalytic theory) pay primary attention to the role of unconscious guilt in a person's life, and how this guilt can be used to maintain various loyalties to parents that hinder adolescent emancipation and the development of independent, successful adult living (Weiss & Sampson, 1986).

Control-mastery theory describes two types of guilt, separation guilt and survivor guilt. Separation guilt originates in a child's desire to become more independent of a parent while simultaneously having the belief that to do so would in some way hurt the parent. For instance, Asch (1976) described cases in which children develop a sense of responsibility for their mother's happiness. This is experienced as the mother puts demands on them which is perceived as the mother saying that the child must make a sacrifice for her. The clinical repercussions of separation guilt have been conceptually linked to various behavior problems such as excessive timidity, impulsiveness, alcoholism, and overeating. As a way of dealing with the separation guilt, an individual may punish himself or herself by complying with various parental demands such as being responsible for the happiness of others. This compliance occurs when the adolescent tries to avoid the guilt feelings by intensifying his or her ties to the parents (i.e., being responsible for meeting the parents needs for feeling good). Consequently, this increases an adolescent's dependencies which will counter the developmental process of becoming more psychologically independent. Modell (1965) expounds on this concept by suggesting that "certain forms of the negative therapeutic reactions can be understood as a



manifestation of a more basic feeling of not having a right to a life; that is not having a right to a separate existence.... Separation from the maternal object in these people is unconsciously perceived as causing the death of the mother. To attain something for oneself, to lead a separate existence, is perceived as depriving the mother of her basic substance " (pg. 330).

However, if a child's mother is unhurt by the child's attempt to be independent of her or is proud of the child's ability to separate, the child will be able to develop unhindered by separation guilt. This in turn will give the adolescent an earlier experience from previous relationships throughout childhood where developmental stages can be entered into and worked through, without the responsibility of a taking care of a parent or sibling.

The second concept of guilt, survivor guilt, was developed to understand the process of survivors of concentration camps and traumatic events such as war, but has been expounded to encompass individuals who feel guilty for "faring" better than their parents or siblings (Modell, 1971). These individuals have a basic belief, according to Modell, that there is only a limited amount of good things in life to go around. Consequently, if they obtain any of the good things, it will be at the expense and ultimate betrayal of a parent or sibling. Likewise, if the child comes from a family laden with conflict, then as the child becomes free of these conflicts and feels more optimistic about life, then the child is taking away from the parent's or sibling's chances of feeling good about life.

These forms of guilt can conceptually be used to explain why some individuals have a difficult time separating from parents or families. This

difficulty may be due to the guilt one feels because of their belief that he or she is responsible for not leaving somebody in the family hurting, or the guilt one feels because he or she may eventually experience more success in life than other family members. Friedman (1985) suggests that both of these powerful feelings of guilt stem from a person's harmful belief that he or she in some way has hurt a parent. Consequently, the desire to be safe and feel connected to the parents will lead children to comply to the parents' rules and in the process internalize harmful beliefs about themselves. Furthermore, when these children mature, the harmful beliefs may unconsciously keep the problems and symptoms reoccurring, which will be maintained by unconscious guilt. Thus, adolescents who separate from their primary caretakers and experience guilt for separating may experience more difficulty separating than adolescents who have families that do not inculcate guilt over leaving home.

The behavior of adolescents who sacrifice their desires and emotional growth in exchange for parental support and relationship ties may be explained in part by Fairbairn (1954), who suggests that the ultimate goal of human behavior and the driving force in development is to establish meaningful relationships ( i.e., relatedness or connectedness). Consequently, if relatedness is not obtained during the early years of life, then at the time the developmental stage of being separate and independent from one's family is encountered, the need for relatedness may predominate and impede the late adolescent separation process. This principle is summed up in the statement that people need a relationship of connection before the process of separation can take place. This ongoing

parental attachment (connection) gives the support needed when the separation and exploration occurs in late adolescents (Marcia, 1983). Youniss and Smollar(1985) also suggest that the separation process entails an increasing independence from one's primary caretakers while still maintaining relationships with them. Consequently, this need for attachment and support while simultaneously experiencing a need for separation creates the paradoxical struggle in late adolescence--being separate and yet connected. Thus, the task of developing adolescent individuality while still maintaining relationships many times can lead to conflict (Hansburg, 1972), and this conflict can result in diminished affection and interrupted communication between parents and the adolescent (Berman, 1970; Glick & Kessler,1974; Hansburg, 1972; Levi, Stierlin, & Savard, 1972).

Adding to the understanding of separation, Farley (1979) suggests that the separation process can best be understood in the context of relational systems, especially the family systems of the adolescents. The family systems theoretical approach to the process of separation focuses on the familial transactional patterns that occur between parents and adolescents. Thus, it is no mystery that college counselors are paying increasing amounts of attention to the role that family dynamics plays in the emotional well-being of the students (Hoffman & Weiss, 1987). Furthermore, in the development of a treatment plans for clients, knowledge of the family dynamics can greatly assist in the therapeutic process (Eichel, 1978; Fox, Rotatori, Macklin, Green, & Fox, 1983). For example, Teyber (1983), using Minuchin's structural family relations

orientation, found that late adolescents who are having difficulty psychologically separating from their parents' are more likely to experience academic failure than those who have successfully separated. He also found that adolescents with cross-generational parent-child alliances had more difficulty emancipating than adolescents who grew up in families with a primary marital coalition. The process of separation, as noted, is the major task of adolescence and many times while attempting to separate, the individual comes into conflict with the family system which may be defended by rigid attitudes and rules which serve to deny the issue of conflict in order to maintain family homeostasis (Barnett, 1968). This rigid defensive system that tries to maintain homeostasis is partly explained by Fromm (1973), who suggests that "an adult who separates violates the family agreement to ignore issues which puts the conflict within the family ideology. Furthermore, the parents are confronted with the loss of significance or their own role dysfunctions or parenthood as well as by their own repressed conflicts" (pg. 145). Thus, the separation process may be hindered by the family environment factors of a rigid system rule, which if broken, will affect the entirety of family functioning and homeostasis.

#### Empirical Studies on Adolescent Separation

Empirical studies on the separation process have looked at the adolescent's perception of their families and the families' perception of the separating adolescent, different home leaving strategies, and various problems encountered while attempting to separate.

One of these studies was conducted by Hoffman (1984) on 75 male and 75 female college students in an attempt to conceptualize different aspects of the psychological separation process and how this process affects academic achievement and love relationships. As a result of his study he created the Psychological Separation Inventory (PSI) which differentiates four forms of psychological separation: Functional Independence (the ability to manage one's own practical and personal affairs with minimal assistance from parents); Attitudinal Independence (having one's own set of values, belief, attitudes, and images of being unique from parents); Emotional Independence (freedom from one's parental provision of closeness, approval, and emotional support); and Conflictual Independence (one's freedom from excessive guilt, anxiety, anger, resentment, and responsibility). Hoffman found that adolescents who experienced greater conflictual independence from their parents appeared to experience a higher degree of personal adjustment (i.e., reported more satisfaction and fewer problems in love relationships) than those who experienced a greater amount of conflict with parents. Furthermore, adolescents experiencing greater emotional independence from parents appeared to have fewer academic problems than those who had a greater need for the parents' emotional support. Hoffman also found that adolescents who identified their attitudes as being similar to their parents (low attitude independence) were also more likely to be personally adjusted.

In a subsequent study using the PSI, Hoffman and Weiss (1987) examined common presenting problems of college students, the amount of parental conflict, dominance, and symptomatology, and the level of

conflictual and emotional independence experienced by the adolescent. They found that students who showed greater conflictual dependence on either parent were more likely to report emotional problems, both personally and for the parents. It was also found that there was a significant correlation between inter-parent conflict and the student's presenting problem, even while the adolescents were physically separated while attending school.

In a series of studies conducted by Moore and Hotch (1981, 1983) on various home leaving strategies used by adolescents, these strategies were conceptualized into 8 clusters: personal control, economic independence, residence, physical separation, school affiliation, dissociation, emotional separation, and graduation. They found that an adolescent's sense of personal control and economic independence are the most important (positive) indicators of the parent-adolescent separation. They also found that emotional separation (not feeling like one belongs or is close to the family) and dissociation (broken ties) were least important and least favorable in the separation process.

Connection to family while going through the separation process seems to play a factor in the adolescents ability to successfully complete the separation. For instance, Sullivan and Sullivan (1980) looked at the effects of the parent-adolescent separation of 242 white males and the relationship the parents had with them. Specifically, these researchers conducted a study that explored the relationship between family support system availability and crisis reactions of entering freshmen college students. They found that adolescents who boarded at college exhibited

increased affection, communication, satisfaction, and independence in relation to parents. They suggested that the changes in relationships as a result of the separation process does not have to be laden with the negative, but that increases in communication, affection, and overall relation to parents can occur. They also found that students who experienced higher crisis reactions upon entering college had fewer family relations living in the community.

Another study supporting the importance of relationship support while separating was conducted by Henton, Lanke, Murphy, and Haynes (1980). They conducted a study of 182 first semester freshman in order to measure the adolescents' perception of their families' availability and support as an indicator of crisis reactions. Self-report measures including number of family relatives living in the college community, distance from home, and anticipated weekend visits with the family were used to investigate crisis reaction. They found that these adolescents, while in their attempt to become more autonomous from their families, needed the continuing support of their families.

Furthermore, Murphy, Silber, Coelho, Hansburg, and Greenberg (1963) reported that college males who expressed positive relations with their parents and were making the most successful adjustments to life away from their families possessed an awareness of freedom to make choices and also took responsibility for their decisions (autonomy). They also found that the families of successfully separating adolescents saw the college experience as a normal and necessary experience for growth.

Therefore, when adolescents have a secure and positive emotional attachment to parents, they will express less conflict in planning strategies on how to leave home (Sullivan & Sullivan, 1980), which in turn seems to enhance the separation process.

Some studies have been conducted that specifically used a social family environment scale to measure various adolescent behaviors. For instance, Fox, Rotatori, Macklin, Green, and Fox (1983), using the Moos Family Environmental Scale, tested 17 socially maladjusted adolescents (i.e., delinquent or uncontrollable) to see their perceptions of their family. They found that these adolescents perceived their families as not highly supportive or concerned about each member's welfare. These families were characterized by poorer family relationships and less social connectedness. Subsequently, these families scored higher on conflict and control and lower on cohesion and independence. Also, Forman and Forman (1981) conducted a study with 80 high school students and investigated the relationship between the family social climate and adolescent personality functioning using the Moos Family Environment Scale and the High School Personality Questionnaire. They found that families that were high in the relationship dimension (i.e., supportive of one another with members encouraging one another to express feelings directly in an environment where there is not a high amount of anger expressed among members) had offspring who were relatively free of anxiety. Thus, there seems to be a strong relationship between the family environment and adolescent functioning, which may significantly affect the separation process as well.



Murphy et al. (1963) found that unsuccessfully separating adolescents (i.e., low autonomy) came from families who felt that coping without the adolescent's presence would be too difficult for the parents. This fundamental role reversal of a child needing to support the parent instead of the parent being there for the child creates a situation where the parents cannot respond to their child's developmental change in late adolescence from being a dependent child to an independent adult. For instance, Moos (1986), using the Moos Family Environmental Scale, found that marital/parental cohesiveness and the encouragement of a sibling's independence seemed to be factors that significantly contributed to psychological separation from parents.

In relation to the psychological separation of adolescence from their parents, some research suggests that the separation process may be different for females compared to males (Hoffman, 1984; Moore, 1987). Indeed, several studies have examined gender differences in identity development (e.g., Cooper & Grotevant, 1987; Josselson, 1987; Kamptner 1988), however, no studies have specifically looked at female separation and used a standardized social family scale (FES) along with the personality factor of the females locus of control in order to more fully understand the interacting variables that may enhance or impede the process.

Moore (1984), in developing the Psychological Separation Inventory (PSI) found that the separation process is more difficult for females than for males. This can be explained in part by the feminist perspective which suggests that females are raised in society to focus on interpersonal relationships and attachments as the ideals on which to build their identity,

while males are encouraged towards separation and autonomy (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982.) This in turn may prevent the adolescent female from becoming psychologically separated from the interpersonal attachments she was so strongly encouraged to establish for identity development. The female would be stepping out of her social-attachment oriented role and also be exploring an area that is contrary to the foundation on which she built her identity. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, females will be used to see what factors of their family environment will impede or enhance psychological separation.

### Locus of Control

One variable that has not been given much consideration in the theoretical or empirical literature on separation, and one that may affect the ease with which an individual separates, is the degree to which the adolescent has an internal or external locus of control. For instance, if an individual is more internally controlled she may feel like she has more personal control over life's situations (including the separation process of adolescence), instead of some predetermined variable directing her life. On the other hand, an adolescent who is externally controlled may feel like she needs to let external variables (i.e., parents, family rules) dictate decisions for her. Therefore, for the adolescent who is externally controlled and grows up in a family that uses guilt as a motivator for compliance in order for the child to maintain connections in the family (i.e., Weiss & Sampson, 1986), she may have more difficulty separating than internally controlled individuals. In partial support of this hypothesis, Teyber (1983) found that individuals were more internally controlled when

the parental relationship or dyad was the primary relationship in the home. Also, Moore and Hotch (1981, 1983) found that one of the positive indicators of successful separation from parents was the personal control (which they defined as making one's own decision, doing things for self, less parental control, and feeling mature enough) these individuals experience over life's situations rather than some predetermined fatalistic event controlling them. This may reveal that certain family interaction variables such as cross-generational alliances breeds individuals who will end up being more externally controlled in order to maintain interpersonal ties, and as a result, their development may eventually be hindered by an incomplete separation.

#### Summary and Purpose of Study

Ideally, psychological separation in late adolescence will take place in the context of a supportive family system that will allow for each individual member to be psychologically separate and yet at the same time maintain relational connections. This balance of autonomy with continuing family support seems necessary to complete the developmental task of separation in late adolescence. For this developmental milestone to occur, it is important to understand the family interactional characteristics that lead to problematic or successful separation.

Problematic separation seems to occur when the adolescent is in an environment where there is no support for his or her autonomy or in cases where the parent and family need the adolescent for their own functioning and therefor can not respond to the needs of the adolescent, thus making the adolescent feel responsible for the family. On the other

hand, successful separation seems to occur when parents and family members do not need the adolescent for their functioning which in turn will allow them to develop unhindered by cross-generational alliances, role reversals, and a rigid system of control.

Although studies have examined various aspects of adolescent functioning, (i.e., acting out behavior, home leaving strategies, college functioning, and peer relationships) there has been little empirical data on the family interactional patterns and an individual's locus of control and their affect on psychological separation in late adolescence. Furthermore, the studies that have been done have mostly focused on male separation to the exclusion of looking at females. Therefore, this study will focus on various family interactional patterns and an individuals locus of control and explore what effects they may have on successful or problematic separation in late-adolescent females.

The overall purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between certain family interaction variables, as measured by the Moos Family Environment Scale and the personality dimension of internal versus external locus of control, to see what role they may have on female psychological separation. The general and specific hypothesis are noted below.

Generally, on the relationship dimension, it is hypothesized that families who are committed to help and support each family member (high cohesion), and are encouraged to act openly and express feelings directly (high expressiveness), and who are not laden with anger, aggression, over responsibility, and conflict towards other family members (high conflict)

will positively correlate with successful Conflictual Independence. Thus, successfully separated adolescents will come from families where they are encouraged to express their emotions with transparency (expressiveness), without fear of hurting a parent or sibling (Weiss & Sampson, 1986) or violating a family's set of rules (Barnett, 1968) or receiving anger and aggressiveness from other family members. Furthermore, while these individuals express themselves they will receive the help and support they need (cohesion). Conversely, adolescents who experience family environments where excessive guilt, anxiety, and responsibility are placed on them, will less likely be able to separate because the adolescent may have to sacrifice his/her own development for the sake of family homeostasis (Barnett, 1968) or for fear of hurting a parent or sibling (Weiss and Sampson, 1986; Modell, 1965).

More specifically, the hypotheses are as follows:

- 1) First, it is expected that scores on the subscale measure of family Conflict will negatively correlate with Conflictual Independence.
- 2) Second it is expected that Cohesion will positively correlate with Conflictual Independence from parents.
- 3) Third, the expressiveness measure of the FES will positively correlate with scores on Conflictual Independence.
- 4) Fourth, Cohesion will positively correlate with the Emotional Independence subscale of the PSI.

The first four hypotheses are conceptually related to the Relationship Dimension of the FES. Females who come from families that are conceptually high in the Relationship Dimension may experience high

Conflictual Independence (freedom from excessive guilt, anxiety, and responsibility) because the family environment in which they grew up, allowed them to express emotions directly, so that when the conflict of separation comes, the process will be seen as a normal and necessary part of development in which the adolescents eventually takes more responsibility for themselves (Murphy et al., 1963). Also, families that focus on relationships can be conceptually related to the family giving the adolescent permission to be separate, while simultaneously not withdrawing their support which resolves the paradoxical task of being separate and yet connected.

5) Fifth, on the personal growth dimension, it is hypothesized that the subscale of Active-Recreational Orientation of the FES will positively correlate with Functional Independence on the PSI.

6) Sixth, it is expected that on the systems maintenance dimension, the subscale of Control will negatively correlate with Conflictual Independence.

7) Lastly, it is expected that more internal control on the Locus of Control scale will positively correlate with higher Emotional Independence and Conflictual Independence.

## METHODS

### Subjects

Subjects included 75 female undergraduate college students enrolled full time at a small southwestern university. Subjects were volunteers who were solicited from the University dorms with ages ranging from 18 to 23 years (Mean=19.6 years). Ethnicity and marital status were controlled for by using Caucasian females who were not married. Subjects were primarily from a white middle-class socioeconomic status in which 77% of the parents had annual incomes of more than \$35,000, with 66% of the mothers and 79% of the fathers having attended some college in their past.

### Measures

Family environment assessment. The Family Environment Scale (FES) (Moos, 1986) is a 90-item true/false questionnaire. The FES provides scores for 10 scales (9 questions per scale) clustered in three groups: Relationship, Personal Growth, and Systems Maintenance Dimensions. Relationship Dimension includes Cohesion (i.e., "the degree of commitment, help and support family members provide for one another"), Expressiveness (i.e., "the extent to which family members are encouraged to act openly and to express their feelings directly"), and Conflict (i.e., "the amount of openly expressed anger, aggression, and conflict among family members"). The Personal Growth Dimension contains Independence (i.e., "the extent to which family members are assertive, are self-sufficient, and make their own decisions"), Achievement Orientation (i.e., "the extent to which activities [such as school and work] are cast into an achievement-oriented or competitive framework"), Intellectual-Cultural Orientation,

(i.e., "the degree of interest in political, social, intellectual, and cultural activities"), Active-Recreational Orientation (i.e., "the extent of participation in social and recreational activities"), and Moral-Religious Emphasis (i.e., "the degree of emphasis on ethical and religious issues and values.") scales. Finally, Systems Maintenance Dimensions includes Organization (i.e., "the degree of importance of clear organizations and structure in planning family activities and responsibilities,") and Control (i.e., "the extent to which set rules and procedures are used to run family life"). Scores on the FES reveal the social climate of the family which is derived from a sample of 1,125 normal families and 500 distressed families. Each sub-scale consists of nine questions with the Cronbach's coefficient alpha for each sub-scale consisting of (N=1067): Cohesion (.78), Expressiveness (.69), Conflict (.75), Independence (.61), Achievement Orientation (.61), Intellectual-Cultural Orientation (.78), Active-Recreational Orientation (.67), Moral-Religious Emphasis (.78), Organization (.76), and Control (.67). One year test-retest (N=241) scores revealed: .63, .69, .76, .52, .69, .79, .72, .89, .81, .79 respectively. Individual raw scores for each of the 10 subscales were computed and converted into standard scores as specified in the conversion table in the manual.

Psychological separation. The Psychological Separation Inventory (PSI) (Hoffman, 1984) is a 138-item test with each item rated on a 5 point Likert-scale (1="not at all true of me", 5= "very true of me"). This measure defines four factors that are the theoretical basis for psychological separation; Functional Independence (i.e., the ability to manage one's own practical and personal affairs with minimal assistance from parents);



Attitudinal Independence (i.e., having one's own set of values, belief, attitudes, and images of being unique from parents); Emotional Independence (i.e., freedom from one's parental provision of closeness, approval, and emotional support); and Conflictual Independence (i.e., one's freedom from excessive guilt, anxiety, anger, resentment, and responsibility). Scores on the PSI reflect high or low separation for each of the four factors ranging from high scores ("very true of me"=5) indicating high psychological separation, to low scores ("not at all true of me"=1) indicating low psychological separation. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha ranged between .84 and .92 for the four scales. Test-retest reliabilities for a 2-3 week span measured .70 to .96 for females (median=.83).

Locus of control. Rotter's 9 item Locus of Control Scale (1966) was used to assess the extent to which subjects feel in control of their lives and destiny (i.e., internal control) or whether they feel that their life and destiny was determined by luck or accident (i.e., external control). Scores on the Rotter locus of control scale indicates whether a person is more internally controlled (high scores) or externally controlled (low scores). Cronbach's coefficient alphas ranged from .70 to .76.

### Procedure

The three questionnaires were counter-balanced into various orders (i.e., FES, PSI, Rotter I/E or PSI, FES, Rotter I/E etc...) to control for possible order effects. Volunteers were solicited from university dormitories and asked to complete the three questionnaires which took approximately 45 minutes. Subjects were contacted via the resident assistants from each

dorm (8 total) and informed of the purpose of using their dormitory in a study. The resident assistants contacted the students during a dorm meeting and gave them an opportunity to be in the study. The subjects who volunteered were then asked to read the instructions which included briefing of them of their rights, giving them an option to receive a copy of the experiment when it is completed, and informing them of their right to leave the experiment at any time. All materials were returned to the residence assistant's room in order to be picked up. Upon completion of the questionnaires, the subjects were debriefed by receiving a sheet describing the experiment and then they were asked to keep the the study confidential until its completion. A copy of the cover letter, questionnaires, and debriefing letter are attached in appendix A, B, and C.

## RESULTS

In the first analysis means and standard deviations were computed on the subscales of the PSI, FES, and locus of control measure (Table 1). Reliabilities are reported in Table 2. The analyses that enabled inferences in reference to the hypotheses were completed with Pearson correlations (Tables 3 and 4). Finally, supplemental analyses were done in the form of eight stepwise multiple regressions, in which the 11 predictor variables of the FES and locus of control were added to the eight dependent variables of the PSI. These were done in order to assess how all of the predictor variables combine in order to account for variance in the dependent measure. Results pertaining to the hypotheses are reported in Tables 5, 6, and 7.

In general there was some support for the hypothesized relationships between family social interaction patterns as a mediating variable in psychological separation. The specific hypotheses are addressed below.

### Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis predicted that family Conflict (as measured by the FES subscale of Conflict) would negatively correlate with Conflictual Independence. To test this hypothesis a Pearson correlation was performed as shown in Tables 3 and 4. There was a significant negative relationship with the predictor variable of Conflict for both mother ( $r = -.56$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and father ( $r = -.48$ ,  $p = .000$ ). This suggests that families that are characterized by anger and aggression among its family members will produce female

adolescents who are more anxious, angry, guilty, resentful, and responsible.

### Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis predicted that Cohesion would positively correlate with Conflictual Independence. To test this hypothesized relationship, a Pearson correlation was performed as shown in Tables 3 and 4. A significant negative relationship was found for mother ( $r=-.52$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and a significant positive relationship was found for father ( $r=.40$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

TABLE 1

Means and Standard Deviations of PSI, FES, and Locus of Control

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
<u>PSI Mother</u>		
Functional Independence	31.04	8.64
Emotional Independence	39.45	12.15
Conflictual Independence	71.97	20.76
Attitudinal Independence	26.15	10.09
<u>PSI Father</u>		
Functional Independence	35.93	10.51
Emotional Independence	43.82	16.27
Conflictual Independence	78.88	15.78
Attitudinal Independence	31.81	12.93
<u>FES</u>		
Cohesion	47.24	19.95
Expressiveness	48.68	15.78
Conflict	52.44	13.49
Independence	50.31	13.00
Achievement Orientation	53.48	10.28
Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	48.33	13.15
Active-Recreational Orientation	48.44	12.86
Moral-Religious Emphasis	49.99	13.49
Organization	49.85	12.57
Control	50.76	13.62
<u>LOC</u>		
Locus of Control	5.82	2.18

Note: PSI=Psychological Separation Inventory, FES=Family Environment Scale, LOC=Locus of Control

TABLE 2

Instrument Reliabilities Using Cronbach's Coefficient AlphaPSI Mother

Functional Independence	.7848
Emotional Independence	.8615
Conflictual Independence	.9441
Attitudinal Independence	.8160

PSI Father

Functional Independence	.8834
Emotional Independence	.9386
Conflictual Independence	.9031
Attitudinal Independence	.9139

FES

Cohesion	.8298
Expressiveness	.7290
Conflict	.7794
Independence	.3441
Achievement Orientation	.4792
Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	.6818
Active-Recreational Orientation	.6585
Moral-Religious Emphasis	.8042
Organization	.6847
Control	.7302

LOC

Locus of Control	.8276
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Note: PSI=Psychological Separation Inventory, FES=Family Environment Scale, LOC=Locus of Control

TABLE 3

Correlation Matrix For Mother PSI with FES and Locus of Control Measures (N=75)

FES	<u>PSI Mother</u>			
	FI	EI	CI	AI
Cohesion	-.16 (p=.178)	-.23* (p=.045)	-.52*** (p=.000)	-.18 (p=.122)
Expressiveness	-.18 (p=.113)	-.26* (p=.026)	.36** (p=.002)	-.10 (p=.388)
Conflict	.11 (p=.338)	.05 (p=.642)	-.56*** (p=.000)	.08 (p=.520)
Independence	.04 (p=.709)	.08 (p=.476)	.47*** (p=.000)	-.19 (p=.311)
AO	.10 (p=.383)	-.04 (p=.721)	-.27* (p=.017)	-.03 (p=.774)
ICO	.08 (p=.474)	-.04 (p=.747)	.11 (p=.332)	-.03 (p=.783)
ARO	.09 (p=.439)	-.16 (p=.164)	.26* (p=.026)	-.07 (p=.572)
MRE	-.09 (p=.462)	-.10 (p=.398)	-.14 (p=.223)	-.16 (p=.165)
Organization	-.09 (p=.455)	-.08 (p=.498)	.00 (p=.954)	.06 (p=.596)
Control	-.03 (p=.798)	.03 (p=.798)	-.50*** (p=.000)	.06 (p=.605)
LOC	-.04 (p=.680)	.01 (p=.833)	-.01 (p=.906)	-.18 (p=.129)

Note: PSI=Psychological Separation Inventory, FES=Family Environment Scale, FI=Functional Independence, EI=Emotional Independence, CI=Conflictual Independence, AI=Attitudinal Independence, AO=Achievement Orientation, ICO=Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, ARO=Active-Recreational Orientation, MRE=Moral Religious Emphasis, and LOC=Locus of Control.

\*p<.05

\*\*p<.01

\*\*\*p<.001

TABLE 4

Correlation Matrix For Father PSI with FES and Locus of Control Measures (N=75)

FES	PSI Father			
	FI	EI	CI	AI
Cohesion	-.27* (p=.018)	-.30* (p=.011)	-.40*** (p=.000)	-.29 (p=.013)
Expressiveness	-.20 (p=.091)	-.20 (p=.074)	.33** (p=.004)	-.22 (p=.057)
Conflict	.08 (p=.504)	.06 (p=.626)	-.48*** (p=.000)	.18 (p=.119)
Independence	-.14 (p=.238)	-.05 (p=.685)	.39*** (p=.001)	-.20 (p=.083)
AO	.09 (p=.423)	.00 (p=.981)	-.10 (p=.387)	.27* (p=.022)
ICO	-.12 (p=.302)	-.18 (p=.124)	.25* (p=.031)	-.20 (p=.087)
ARO	-.06 (p=.618)	-.15 (p=.213)	.18 (p=.117)	-.12 (p=.328)
MRE	-.12 (p=.319)	-.06 (p=.619)	-.06 (p=.618)	-.28** (p=.017)
Organization	-.04 (p=.763)	-.06 (p=.632)	-.10 (p=.419)	.17 (p=.142)
Control	-.05 (p=.667)	-.07 (p=.576)	-.46*** (p=.000)	.06 (p=.609)
LOC	-.05 (p=.362)	-.02 (p=.854)	.09 (p=.415)	-.11 (p=.154)

Note: PSI=Psychological Separation Inventory, FES=Family Environment Scale, FI=Functional Independence, EI=Emotional Independence, CI=Conflictual Independence, AI=Attitudinal Independence, AO=Achievement Orientation, ICO=Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, ARO=Active-Recreational Orientation, MRE=Moral Religious Emphasis, and LOC=Locus of Control.

\*p<.05

\*\*p<.01

\*\*\*p<.001



### Hypothesis Three

It was expected that the Expressiveness measure of the FES will positively correlate with the Conflictual Independence subscale of the PSI. The correlations were significant for both mother ( $r=.36$ ,  $p=.002$ ) and father ( $r=.33$ ,  $p=.004$ ). In other words families that encouraged their daughters to act openly and express their feelings directly will produce late adolescents who will not experience excessive anxiety, guilt, anger, resentment, and responsibility.

### Hypothesis Four

It was expected that Cohesion (as measured by the FES ) would correlate positively with the Emotional Independence subscale of the PSI. The Pearson correlation revealed that a negative relationship was found for both mother ( $r=-.23$ ,  $p=.045$ ) and father ( $r=-.30$ ,  $p=.011$ ) (Table 3 and 4). This suggests that families that are helpful, supportive and committed to one another will produce adolescent females who are still in need of emotional support and encouragement during the late adolescent stage of separation.

### Hypothesis Five

It was hypothesized that the subscale of Independence of the FES would correlate positively with Functional Independence on the PSI. No significant relationship was found.

### Hypothesis Six

It was hypothesized that the subscale of Control on the FES would negatively correlate with Conflictual Independence. The correlational analysis yielded a significant negative relationship for these variables for

both mother ( $r=-.50$ ,  $p<.000$ ) and father ( $r=-.46$ ,  $p<.000$ ) (Table 3 and 4). In other words, families that are highly structured and run their families according to strict rules will produce adolescent females who will experience more anxiety, anger, guilt, resentment, and responsibility.

#### Hypothesis Seven

Lastly, it was expected that the personality characteristic of locus of control would positively correlate with Emotional Independence and Conflictual Independence on the PSI. The correlational analysis did not confirm either of these hypotheses.

#### Additional Analysis

The supplemental analyses in the form of the eight stepwise multiple regressions were conducted in order to examine the combination of the multiple variables and how they relate and vary with psychological separation (Tables 5, 6, and 7). It was found that when all of the predictor variables were entered with the dependent measure of

TABLE 5

#### Stepwise Multiple Regression Analyses of Functional Independence with FES Scale and Locus of Control

<u>Predictor Variable</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>R<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>Adj R<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig F</u>
<u>Father PSI</u>					
Cohesion	.274	.075	.062	5.83	.018

TABLE 6

Stepwise Multiple Regression Analyses of Emotional Independence with FES Scale and Locus of Control

Predictor Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig F
<u>Mother PSI</u>					
Expressiveness	.264	.070	.057	5.39	.023
<u>Father PSI</u>					
Cohesion	.295	.087	.075	6.88	.010

TABLE 7

Stepwise Multiple Regression Analyses of Conflictual Independence with FES Scale and Locus of Control

Predictor Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig F
<u>Mother PSI</u>					
Conflict	.564	.317	.308	33.50	.000
Control	.638	.407	.390	24.39	.000
Cohesion	.664	.441	.417	18.42	.000
<u>Father PSI</u>					
Conflict	.483	.233	.22	21.96	.000
Control	.557	.310	.29	15.96	.000

Conflictual Independence, that Conflict entered first and accounted for 31.7% of the variance for mother and 23.3% of the variance for father.

Second, the variable of Control entered the equation and accounted for an additional unique variance of 9% for mother and 6.8% for father. Thirdly, Cohesion was entered and accounted for an additional 3.4% of the variance for mother.

Then, all the predictor variables were entered into the stepwise multiple regression with the dependent measure of Functional Independence. It was found that the Cohesion variable accounted for 7.5% of the variance for father.

Lastly, the multiple variables were then analyzed with the dependent measure of Emotional Independence. It was found that the Expressiveness variable accounted for 7% of the variance for mother and the variable of Cohesion accounted for 8.7 % of the variance for father.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between psychological separation and late-adolescent females' family interaction patterns (as measured by the FES) along with locus of control. More specifically, it was hypothesized that females who came from families that were perceived (by them) as being supportive of each member, encouraging them to express their feelings directly while not being highly conflicted (i.e., being angry and aggressive) in their relationships with other family members would better relate to some aspects of psychological separation. These hypotheses were partially confirmed: There was a positive relationship between the subscale of Cohesion and Expressiveness, and Conflictual Independence. Also, a significant negative relationship was found between Conflict, Cohesion (for mother), Control, and Conflictual Independence. Furthermore, females who come from supportive and helpful families will experience more guilt, anger, anxiety, resentment, and responsibility in regard to mother. Lastly, a significant negative relationship existed between Cohesion and Emotional Independence. The specific hypothesis are addressed below.

The first hypothesis predicted that scores on measures of family Conflict (as measured by the FES subscale of Conflict) would be negatively correlated with Conflictual Independence (i.e., one's freedom from excessive guilt, anxiety, anger, resentment, and responsibility). This relationship was confirmed for both the mother and the father. This finding suggests and supports the notion that families that have excessive conflict in which the children are exposed to the aggression and anger of

its members are more likely to produce adolescents who are resentful and angry themselves. Also, if conflict occurs within the marital dyad which leaves the adolescent in a cross generational alliance (i.e., Teyber, 1983) or role reversal with a parent, the adolescent may feel responsible for the emotional well-being of the parent during the developmental stage of separation (Asch, 1976). This in turn may leave the adolescent with feelings of anxiety and guilt if she were to separate and live her own life (Weiss & Sampson, 1986; Modell, 1965). These parental and familial conflicts may cause these children to be excessively responsible for their parents during the developmental stage of separation, and as a result the adolescent will experience a conflictual dependence on their primary caretakers. This supports Hoffman and Weiss (1987) who found that students who showed less Conflictual Independence were more likely to report emotional problems.

The separation process is a progressive developmental task that begins in the second year of life (e.g., Mahler, 1975). Blos (1967) suggests that the separation process of adolescents parallels this earlier separation experience. However, if the child at the age of two did not have permission to separate because of the parents' own needs, then when the child at a later date (such as adolescence) attempts to separate, they feel anxious due to the inexperience of separating. Furthermore, she may feel that in essence she does not have a right to her own life due to the role reversal within the family (Modell, 1965). This notion corroborates with Hoffman (1984) who found that the more Conflictual Independence produced

adolescents who were better personally adjustment (i.e., more satisfaction in love relationships and academic achievement).

Hypothesis two predicted that Cohesion would positively correlate with Conflictual Independence from parents. A significant relationship was found for both parents in the correlational analysis. However, a negative relationship exists for the mother while a positive relationship was found for the father. Overall, a positive correlation suggests that families who provide support, help, and are committed to one another produce females who are more free from excessive guilt, anxiety, anger, resentment, and responsibility. Though family Cohesion positively relates to higher Conflictual Independence from father, the same does not appear to be true for the mother. In fact, the results of this hypothesis suggests that females who perceive their families to be supportive and helpful will experience more conflictual dependencies in relation to their mothers. This suggests that the mother-daughter relationship is not only different than the father-daughter relationship during the separation process, but the mother-daughter relationship may be more prone to conflicts in which guilt, anger, resentment, anxiety, and responsibility are common social patterns.

This finding may in part be explained in the feminist literature which talks about the socialization process of females (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982). If mothers were socialized to build their identity on relationships, bonding, and attachment, then during the separation process in which their daughters (socialized in the same way) leave the parent, there may be resentment, anxiety, and a sense of responsibility

that is placed on the daughter to maintain the same relationship of support, help, and commitment.

The third hypothesis stated that females who come from families that encourage expressiveness (as measured in the FES) will positively correlate with Conflictual Independence. The correlations were significant for both the mother and the father, which suggests that families who encourage their children to act openly and express their feelings directly will experience more freedom in regard to anxiety, guilt, anger, resentment, and responsibility. This corroborates with Hauser, Powers, Noam, Jacobson, Weiss, and Follansbee, (1984) who found that adolescents who experience family interaction patterns which involve high amounts of sharing as well as challenges in the context of support were more likely to experience higher levels of ego development. In other words, an individual can express their individuality without losing support from its family members which in turn resolves the paradoxical task of being separate and connected.

The fourth hypothesis suggested that Cohesion would correlate positively with Emotional Independence subscale of the PSI. The correlational analysis revealed that a negative relationship existed for both mother and father.

The actual findings were diametrically opposed to the stated hypothesis, which suggested that females who perceive their families as supportive and helpful would still need their parents' provision of closeness, approval, and emotional support during the separation stage. Though conceptually it makes sense that an individual needs to arrive at a



place in their development where they do not need the parents' provision of closeness, approval, and emotional support, this may in fact not be completed during late-adolescence. Hoffman (1984) found that emotional independence from parents was related to fewer academic problems; however, emotional independence does not appear to be associated with fewer separation problems. These findings suggests that the time period in which an adolescent female is in need of parental emotional support may be longer than the late adolescent period entails.

This finding can be explained, in part, in the feminist literature which suggests that females are socialized to focus on predominantly interpersonal and attachment oriented relationships on which to build their identity (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982). Thus, for a female to be emotionally dependent on a parent is in line with their experiences in the socialization process which eventually becomes the catalyst for their identity development. For example, in examining the relationship between parental attachment and late adolescent separation, Moore (1987) found that emotional detachment (i.e., being detached and not close to family) from parents was the least important component of separation. This suggests the importance of an ongoing parent-adolescent attachment, even during the separation process. In fact, he found that older adolescents who viewed separation as emotional detachment from parents demonstrated more difficulty in maintaining positive relational ties to parents. Furthermore, Henton et al. (1980) found that for adolescents who were attempting to be more autonomous, the continuing support of the family was still needed. Though the concept of separation may conjure

thoughts of distance and disconnection from parents, the importance of being connected and still separate is the ultimate goal and paradoxical task of the late-adolescent separation process (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985). Hill and Steinberg (1976) provide the framework in which this paradoxical task can be negotiated. They view the growth of an adolescent as occurring by a repetitive re-definition of the parent-child relationship (by both sides) rather than the adolescent or parent simply leaving the relationship.

The fifth hypothesis stated that the subscale of Independence on the FES would positively correlate with Functional Independence on the PSI. Though conceptually this relationship makes sense, this hypothesis was not supported. It seems that adolescents who have experienced a family that allowed them to be assertive, self-sufficient and make their own decisions while growing up, will give them a base of experience and confidence on which to function in late adolescence. This relationship was not supported.

The lack of a relationship between these two variables might be the result of several factors. First, the Cronbachs' coefficient reliabilities were relatively low which means that the scale may not actually be measuring the construct of independence. Also, since this sample included only females (who may build their identities on connections and relational attachments, and not on independence), a more accurate measure of being self-sufficient (which is conceptually opposed to female socialization) may need to be obtained to accurately measure this relationship for females. And lastly, this relationship between Independence on the subscale of FES and Functional Independence on the PSI may actually be stronger than

revealed in the Pearsons correlation analysis. The low reliabilities suggest that the correlation may be higher because if the reliabilities would increase, then there may be a possible increase in the correlation as well. However, due to the low reliabilities on the subscale of Independence, this relationship cannot be statistically validated.

For the sixth hypothesis, it was expected that the control subscale on the FES would correlate negatively with Conflictual Independence. Thus, females who perceived their families as operating according to a highly controlled set of rules and procedures in order to maintain homeostasis were expected to experience more guilt, resentment, anxiety, and responsibility. The correlational analysis revealed a significant relationship existed both for mother and father.

This result corroborates with the theoretical literature that show that family environments that have rigid family rules to maintain homeostasis (Barnett, 1968) may put excessive responsibility on the child for the parental or systemic pain (Fromm, 1941; Weiss & Sampson, 1986), will be less likely to be free of excessive anxiety, guilt, anger, resentment, and responsibility. These female adolescents would be so concerned with the conflicts within the family (low conflictual independence) that when they attempt to separate, the guilt or possible cross-generational alliance needed to keep homeostasis in the family system might be expected to keep this task from occurring. It also seems that if females come from a family environment in which rigid family rules and roles are used, individuality would only be allowed within the framework of those rules which would create an adolescent who may actually be resentful, angry, and anxious in

building individuality. This would be in contrast to Moore and Hotchs' (1981, 1983) findings in which one of the positive indicators of successful psychological separation was the personal control that the separating adolescent possessed (which they defined as making one's own decisions and doing things for self). Also, Murphy et al. (1963) found that families of successfully separating adolescents saw the college experience as a normal and necessary experience for growth.

Lastly, for the seventh hypothesis it was expected that scores on the locus of control measure would positively correlate with Conflictual Independence and Emotional Independence. In other words these adolescents were expected to not be as concerned about parental relationships (i.e., cross generational alliances) and family rules to give them permission to separate, but will rather see that they can make a difference in deciding their destiny (more Conflictual Independence). Furthermore, these females will not need their parents' approval and closeness (Emotional Independence) but will see that they can make a difference in deciding their destiny and taking more responsibility for themselves (Murphy et al, 1963). No significant relationship was found for either parent.

This in part may be due to the Rotters' Locus of Control measure which may not have been a good construct in accurately measuring the female adolescents' personality trait of Locus of Control. Therefore, in order to better measure this personality characteristic of whether a female is more prone to a feelings of fate directing her life or if a she feels that

she has the responsibility to control her fate, a more accurate measure may be needed.

The supplemental analyses were computed on the stepwise multiple regressions in order to see how all the predictor variables together would account for the variance in the dependent measure. In the analysis of the relationship between the predictor variables and Conflictual Independence for mother, the predictor variables of Cohesion, Conflict and Control were first to enter the equation and accounted for a significant amount of the variance. The variables of Expressiveness, Independence, Achievement-Orientation, and Active-Recreational Orientation were predictive of the dependent measure, however they did not enter the equation for mother (Table 6). For the father it was found that the predictor variables of Conflict and Control entered the equation first and the variables of Cohesion, Expressiveness, Independence, and Intellectual-Cultural Orientation did not enter the equation. This may be due to the high correlations between the predictor variables of Conflict and Control.

It was also found in the multiple regression analysis that the Cohesion variable was predictive of the dependent measure of Emotional Independence. This may be due to the high correlation between the two predictive measures of Cohesion and Expressiveness. Lastly, Cohesion, when entered with all of the predictor variables, accounted for 7.5% of the variance in the Functional Independence subscale for father.

Since this was a correlational study, it is impossible to make claims about the specific causal relationships in female adolescents psychological separation from their families. Also, because the present sample only

included middle-class Caucasian females and was a relatively small sample size, generalization of results should be made with caution. It may also be noted that there are cultural limitations because separation and individuality may not be esteemed as a goal of healthy functioning in some cultures. Therefore, generalization to different cultural populations must also be made with caution.

One aspect of this study that makes it difficult to interpret the results and get a relationship that is significant is that some of the subscales on the PSI and FES are broad. For instance, Conflictual Independence (i.e., one's freedom from excessive guilt, anxiety, anger, resentment, and responsibility) measures so many aspects of conflict that can occur between a parent and adolescent that it is difficult to be precise in the relationships of the variables. The adolescent's predominate emotion may be guilt, or anger, but it is difficult to delineate with a scale such as Conflictual Independence that encompasses a variety of emotions. Therefore, it may be a good idea for future studies to get a more precise scale to correlate with the PSI and FES that may pinpoint the specific dynamics of a relationship. It could be that female adolescents who score low on conflictual independence from mother could be because of guilt that the mother may be putting on her. It also could be a very different thing for a female to experience anxiety in psychologically separating because of her socialization process and formulation of her identity did not reinforce such behaviors.

Suggestions for further research are to include males in the sample in order to more clearly decipher any gender differences that may occur

during the separation process. It may be that males tend to view their family social interaction patterns differently, and as a result they may perceive and approach the psychological separation stage of development differently. Males are socialized to be more autonomous and as a result they may negotiate the psychological separation process differently. For instance, if a male is socialized to be more autonomous, then when the separation process occurs in late adolescence the male may have many experiences from this socialization process and as a result may not experience the anxiety or guilt that a female might.

It is also suggested that a cross-cultural comparison be drawn to see what the main differences are among cultures. For instance, in an analytical culture like the United States, where the goal in late adolescents is for the development of individuality and autonomy, the same goal may be counter productive and not permitted in a relational culture like South America in which loyalty to family relationships is of utmost importance. It may be that the measures used in this study may not be reliable in assessing psychological separation and the family social interaction patterns of other cultures. Thus, the measures used may not be measuring the same construct when looking at various behaviors in the context of cultural differences. However, it would be valuable to be able to more clearly specify what the differences in family interaction patterns may be and how this may account for a possible cultural differences in the separation process of late adolescence.

Clinically, it may be suggested that the Ideal Form (Form I) of the Family Environment Scale be used to assess not only how the separating



adolescent perceives her family environment (Form R), but how they would like for the family system to change according to the changing needs in the adolescence life. Counselors that work with adolescents may find it useful to measure the current family interactional patterns that may be affecting this important separation process and which consequently may be influencing various behaviors or experiences of the adolescent (i.e., guilt, anxiety, and anger). However, they also may ascertain some of the adolescents needs based on the adolescence wishes and desires of how they want their families to be (Ideal Form). If the discrepancy between the perception of one's family (Form R) and the wish of how one's family might be (Form I) is ascertained, it may bring more clarity to the psychological separation process and specifically what variables enhance or impede it. This may aid those who work with adolescents in specifying current family patterns that may be hindering them in the important paradoxical negotiation process of being separate and yet connected.

In conclusion, this study found that females who came from families that were supportive of each member, encouraging members to express individuality, and were not conflicted in their relationships with other family members seemingly experienced less problems in psychologically separating from their families. More specifically, it was found that conflicted families who did not support the female adolescents, nor encourage them to express themselves, and showed more control related to females who were less emotionally and conflictually independent from their parents.



**ATTACHMENT A: COVER LETTER**

Family Experiences and How It Affects Development Study  
Department of Psychology

The following study is to determine issues that are important to human development. We are interested in finding out about peoples experiences of growing up in their families and how it may influence their development. Thanks for your willingness to participate in this study.

It is important to fill out the following questionnaires thoughtfully and as directed so that the information obtained can be useful. Remember that all your answers will be strictly confidential (you do not need to put your name on any part of the test), and that you are free to discontinue your participation at any time. If you are interested in a copy of the group results when the study is complete, please indicate so at the end of the questionnaires

Again, thanks for your participation.

Sincerely,

Steve Bo, M.S. Candidate

Ed Teyber, Ph.D.

## **ATTACHMENT B: QUESTIONNAIRES**

### Psychological Separation Inventory

Instructions: The following list of statements describes different aspects of students' relationships with both their mother and father. Imagine a scale ranging from 1 to 5 that tells how well each statement applies to you. In the space next to the statement, please enter a number from "1" (Not at all true of me) to "5" (Very true of me). If the statement does not apply enter "1". Please be completely honest. Your answers are entirely confidential and will be useful only if they accurately describe you.

Not at all true of me 1	A little bit true of me 2	Moderately true of me 3	Quite a bit true of me 4	Very true of me 5
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1. I like to show my friends pictures of my mother.
2. Sometimes my mother is a burden to me.
3. I feel longing if I am away from my mother for too long.
4. My ideas regarding racial equality are similar to my mother's.
5. My mother's wishes have influenced my selection of friends.
6. I feel like I am constantly at war with my mother.
7. I blame my mother for many of the problems I have.
8. I wish I could trust my mother more.
9. My attitudes about obscenity are similar to my mother's
10. When I am in difficulty I usually call on my mother to help me out of trouble.
11. My mother is the most important person in the world to me.
12. I have to be careful not to hurt my mother's feelings.
13. I wish my mother lived nearer so I could visit her more frequently.
14. My opinions regarding the role of women are similar to my mother's.
15. I often ask my mother to assist me in solving my personal problems.
16. I sometimes feel like I am being punished by my mother.
17. Being away from my mother makes me feel lonely.

Not at all true of me 1	A little bit true of me 2	Moderately true of me 3	Quite a bit true of me 4	Very true of me 5
-------------------------------	---------------------------------	-------------------------------	--------------------------------	-------------------------

18. I wish my mother wasn't so overprotective.
19. My opinion regarding the role of men is similar to my mother's.
20. I wouldn't make a major purchase without my mother's approval.
21. I wish my mother wouldn't try to manipulate me.
22. I wish my mother wouldn't try to make fun of me.
23. I sometimes call home just to hear my mother's voice.
24. My religious beliefs are similar to my mother's.
25. My mother's wishes have influenced my choice of major at school.
26. I feel like I have obligations to my mother that I wish I didn't have.
27. My mother expects too much from me.
28. I wish I could stop lying to my mother.
29. My belief regarding how to raise children are similar to my mother's.
30. My mother helps me to make my budget.
31. While I am at home on a vacation I like to spend most of my time with my mother.
32. I often wish my mother would treat me more like an adult.
33. After being with my mother for a vacation I find it difficult to leave her.
34. My values regarding honesty are similar to my mother's.
35. I generally consult with my mother when I make plans for an out of town weekend.
36. I am often angry with my mother.
37. I like to hug and kiss my mother.
38. I hate it when my mother makes suggestions about what I do.
39. My attitudes about solitude are similar to my mother's.

Not at all true of me 1	A little bit true of me 2	Moderately true of me 3	Quite a bit true of me 4	Very true of me 5
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40. I consult with my mother when deciding about part- time employment.
41. I decide what to do according to whether my mother will approve of it.
42. Even when my mother has a good idea I refuse to listen to it because she made it.
43. When I do poorly in school I feel I'm letting my mother down.
44. My attitudes regarding environmental protection are similar to my mother's.
45. I ask my mother what to do when I get in a tight situation.
46. I wish my mother wouldn't try to get me to take sides with her.
47. My mother is my best friend.
48. I argue with my mother over little things.
49. My beliefs about how the world began are similar to my mother's.
50. I do what my mother decides on most questions that come up.
51. I seem to be closer to my mother than most people my age.
52. My mother is sometimes a source of embarrassment to me.
53. Sometimes I think I am too dependant on my mother.
54. My beliefs about what happens to people when they die are similar to my mother's.
55. I ask for my mother's advice when planning my vacation time.
56. I am sometimes ashamed of my mother.
57. I care too much about my mother's reactions.
58. I get angry when my mother criticizes me.
59. My attitudes regarding sex are similar to my mother's.
60. I like to have my mother help me pick out the clothing I buy for special occasions.

Not at all true of me 1	A little bit true of me 2	Moderately true of me 3	Quite a bit true of me 4	Very true of me 5
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61. I sometimes feel like an extension of my mother.
62. When I don't write my mother often enough I feel guilty.
63. I feel uncomfortable keeping things from my mother.
64. My attitudes regarding national defense are similar to my mother's.
65. I call my mother whenever anything goes wrong.
66. I often have to make decisions for my mother.
67. I'm not sure I could make it in life without my mother.
68. I sometimes resent it when my mother tells me what to do.
69. My attitudes regarding mentally ill people are similar to my mother's.
70. I like to show my friends pictures of my father.
71. Sometimes my father is a burden to me.
72. I feel longing if I am away from my father for too long.
73. My ideas regarding racial equality are similar to my father's.
74. Mt father's wishes have influenced my selection of friends.
75. I feel like I am constantly at war with my father.
76. I blame my father for many of the problems I have.
77. I wish I could trust my father more.
78. My attitudes about obscenity are similar to my father's.
79. When I am in difficulty I usually call on my father to help me out of trouble.
80. My father is the most important person in the world to me.
81. I have to be careful not to hurt my father's feelings.
82. I wish that my father lived nearer so I could visit him more frequently.
83. My opinions regarding the role of women are similar to my father's.

Not at all true of me 1	A little bit true of me 2	Moderately true of me 3	Quite a bit true of me 4	Very true of me 5
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84. I often ask my father to assist me in solving my personal problems.
85. I sometimes feel like I'm being punished by my father.
86. Being away from my father makes me feel lonely.
87. I wish my father wasn't so overprotective.
88. My opinions regarding the role of men are similar to my father's.
89. I wouldn't make a major purchase without my father's approval.
90. I wish my father wouldn't try to manipulate me.
91. I wish my father wouldn't try to make fun of me.
92. I sometimes call home just to hear my father's voice.
93. My religious beliefs are similar to my father's.
94. My father's wishes have influenced my choice of major at school.
95. I feel I have obligations to my father that I wish I didn't have.
96. My father expects too much from me.
97. I wish I could stop lying to my father.
98. My beliefs regarding how to raise children are similar to my father's.
99. My father helps me to make my budget.
100. When I am home on a vacation I like to spend most of my time with my father.
101. I often wish that my father would treat me more like an adult.
102. After being with my father for a vacation I find it hard to leave him.
103. My values regarding honesty are similar to my father's.
104. I generally consult my father when I make plans for an out of town weekend.
105. I am often angry at my father.
106. I like to hug and kiss my father.



Not at all true of me 1	A little bit true of me 2	Moderately true of me 3	Quite a bit true of me 4	Very true of me 5
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107. I hate it when my father makes suggestions about what I do.
108. My attitudes about solitude are similar to my father's.
109. I consult with my father when deciding about part - time employment.
110. I decide what to do according to whether my father will approve of it.
111. Even when my father has a good idea I refuse to listen to it because he made it.
112. When I do poorly in school I feel I am letting my father down.
113. My attitudes regarding environmental protection are similar to my father's.
114. I ask my father what to do when I get in a tough situation.
115. I wish my father wouldn't try to get me to take sides with him.
116. My father is my best friend.
117. I argue with my father over little things.
118. My beliefs about how the world began are similar to my father's.
119. I do what my father decides on most questions that come up.
120. I seem to be closer to my father than most people my age.
121. Mt father is sometimes a source of embarrassment to me.
122. Sometimes I think I am too dependant on my father.
123. My beliefs about what happens to people when they die are similar to my father's.
124. I ask my father's advice when I am planning my vacation time.
125. I am sometimes ashamed of my father.
126. I care too much about my father's reactions.
127. I get angry when my father criticizes me.

Not at all true of me 1	A little bit true of me 2	Moderately true of me 3	Quite a bit true of me 4	Very true of me 5
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128. My attitudes regarding sex are similar to my father's
129. I like to have my father help me pick out the clothing I buy for special occasions.
130. I sometimes feel like an extension of my father.
131. When I don't write my father often enough I feel guilty.
132. I feel uncomfortable keeping things from my father.
133. My attitudes regarding national defense are similar to my father's.
134. I call my father whenever anything goes wrong.
135. I often have to make decisions for my father.
136. I'm not sure I could make it in life without my father.
137. I sometimes resent it when my father tells me what to do.
138. My attitudes regarding mentally ill people are similar to my father's.

## MY FAMILY

### Instructions

There are 90 questions in this section. They are statements about families.

You are to decide which of these statements are true of your family and which are false. If you think the statement is true or mostly true of your family, circle T (true). If you think the statements false or mostly false of your family, circle F (false).

You may feel that some of the statements are true for some family members and false for others. Circle the T if the statement is true for most members. Circle F if the statement is false for most members. If the members are evenly divided, decide what is the stronger overall impression and answer accordingly.

Remember, we would like to know what your family is like to you. So do not try to figure out how other members see your family, but do give us your general impression of your family for each statement.

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. Family members really help and support one another.                     | T F |
| 2. Family members often keep their feelings to themselves.                 | T F |
| 3. We fight a lot in our family.   | T F |
| 4. We don't do things on our own very often in our family.                 | T F |
| 5. We feel it is important to be the best at whatever you do.              | T F |
| 6. We often talk about political and social problems.                      | T F |
| 7. We spend most evenings and weekends at home.                            | T F |
| 8. Family members attend church, synagogue, or Sunday School fairly often. | T F |
| 9. Activities in our family are pretty carefully planned.                  | T F |
| 10. Family members are rarely ordered around.                              | T F |
| 11. We often seem to be killing time at home.                              | T F |

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|--|-----|
| 12. We say anything we want to around our home.  | T F |
| 13. Family members rarely become openly angry.   | T F |
| 14. In our family, we are strongly encouraged to be independent.                         | T F |
| 15. Getting ahead in life is very important in our family.                               | T F |
| 16. We rarely go to lectures, plays, or concerts.  | T F |
| 17. Friends often come over for dinner or to visit.                                      | T F |
| 18. We don't say prayers in our family.  | T F |
| 19. We are generally very neat and orderly.  | T F |
| 20. There are very few rules to follow in our family.                                    | T F |
| 21. We put a lot of energy into what we do at home.                                      | T F |
| 22. It's hard to "blow off steam" at home without upsetting somebody.                    | T F |
| 23. Family members sometimes get so angry they throw things.                             | T F |
| 24. We think things out for ourselves in our family.                                     | T F |
| 25. How much money a person makes is not very important to us.                           | T F |
| 26. Learning about new and different things is very important in our family.             | T F |
| 27. Nobody in our family is active in sports, Little League, bowling, etc.               | T F |
| 28. We often talk about the religious meaning of Christmas, Passover, or other holidays. | T F |
| 29. It's often hard to find things when you need them in our household.                  | T F |
| 30. My mother helps me to make my budget.  | T F |
| 31. There is a feeling of togetherness in our family.                                    | T F |
| 32. We tell each other about our personal problems.                                      | T F |
| 33. Family members hardly ever lose their temper.  | T F |
| 34. We come and go as we want to in our family.  | T F |

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|---|-----|
| 35. We believe in competition and "may the best man win".                                   | T F |
| 36. We are not that interested in cultural activities.                                      | T F |
| 37. We often go to the movies, sports events, camping, etc.                                 | T F |
| 38. We don't believe in Heaven or Hell.   | T F |
| 39. Being on time is very important in our family.  | T F |
| 40. There are set ways of doing things at home.   | T F |
| 41. We rarely volunteer when something has to be done at home.                              | T F |
| 42. If we feel like doing something on the spur of the moment we often just pick up and go. | T F |
| 43. Family members often criticize each other.  | T F |
| 44. There is very little privacy in our home.   | T F |
| 45. We always strive to do things just a little bit better the next time.                   | T F |
| 46. We rarely have intellectual discussions.  | T F |
| 47. Everyone in our family has a hobby or two.  | T F |
| 48. Family members have strict ideas about what is right and wrong.                         | T F |
| 49. People change their minds often in our family.  | T F |
| 50. There is a strong emphasis on following the rules in our family.                        | T F |
| 51. Family members really back each other up.   | T F |
| 52. Someone usually gets upset if you complain in our family.                               | T F |
| 53. family members sometimes hit each other.  | T F |
| 54. Family members almost always rely on themselves when a problem comes up.                | T F |
| 55. Family members rarely worry about job promotions, school grades, etc.                   | T F |
| 56. Someone in our family plays a musical instrument.                                       | T F |

57. Family members are not very involved in recreational activities outside work or school. T F
58. We believe there are some things you just have to take on faith T F
59. Family members make sure their rooms are neat. T F
60. Everyone has an equal say in family decisions. T F
61. There is very little group spirit in our family. T F
62. Money and paying bills is openly talked about in our family. T F
63. If there's a disagreement in our family, we try hard to smooth things over and keep the peace. T F
64. Family members strongly encourage each other to stand up for their rights. T F
65. In our family, we don't try that hard to succeed. T F
66. Family members often go to the library. T F
67. Family members sometimes attend courses or take lessons for some hobby or interest (outside of school). T F
68. In our family each person has different ideas about what is right and wrong. T F
69. Each person's duties are clearly defined in our family. T F
70. We can do whatever we want to in our family. T F
71. We really get along well with each other. T F
72. We are usually careful about what we say to each other. T F
73. Family members often try to one-up or out-do each other. T F
74. It's hard to be by yourself without hurting someone's feelings in our household. T F
75. "Work before play" is the rule in our family. T F
76. Watching T.V. is more important than reading in our family. T F
77. Family members go out a lot. T F
78. The Bible is a very important book in our home. T F

79. Money is not handled very carefully in our family. T F
80. Rules are pretty inflexible in our household. T F
81. There is plenty of time and attention for everyone in our family. T F
82. There are a lot of spontaneous discussions in our family. T F
83. In our family, we believe you don't ever get anywhere by raising your voice. T F
84. We are not really encouraged to speak up for ourselves in our family. T F
85. Family members are often compared with others as to how well they are doing at work or school. T F
86. Family members really like music, art and literature. T F
87. Our main form of entertainment is watching T.V. or listening to the radio. T F
88. Family members believe that if you sin you will be punished. T F
89. Dishes are usually done immediately after eating. T F
90. You can't get away with much in our family. T F

## Locus of Control

**Directions:** This is an opinion scale--there are no right or wrong answers. For each of the following nine pairs of items, please indicate whether you generally agree more with statement 1 or statement 2 by blackening the appropriate number on the matching response line.

1.    1. The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense.  
      2. Most students don't realize the extent to which their grades are influenced by accidental happenings.
2.    1. In the case of the well prepared student there is rarely if ever such a thing as an unfair test.  
      2. Many times exam questions tend to be so unrelated to course work that studying is really useless.
3.    1. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it.  
      2. Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.
4.    1. In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.  
      2. Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.
5.    1. Who gets to be the boss often depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place first.  
      2. Getting people to do the right thing depends on ability, luck has little or nothing to do with it.
6.    1. Most people don't realize the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings.  
      2. There really is no such thing as "luck."
7.    1. Sometimes I couldn't understand how teachers arrived at the grades they have.  
      2. There was a direct connection between how hard I studied and the grades I got.
8.    1. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the thing that happen to me.  
      2. It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.
9.    1. What happens to me is my own doing.  
      2. Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.



### Background Information

1. Your age:
  - a. 18-19 years
  - b. 20-21 years
  - c. 22-23 years
2. Your sex:
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
3. Your current marital status:
  - a. single.
  - b. married
  - c. separated/divorced
  - d. widowed
  - e. other
4. What is your ethnic background? (check one):
  - a. Asian
  - b. Black
  - c. Caucasian
  - d. Latino
  - e. other
5. What is the highest level of education you have completed: (check one)
  - a. have not finished high school
  - b. high school graduate
  - c. trade school
  - d. some college (includes A.A degree)
  - e. graduated from college (B.A or B.S degree)
  - f. some post-graduate work
  - g. graduate or professional degree
6. What is your parent's current approximate annual household income:
  - a. less than \$10,000
  - b. \$10,000 to \$25,000
  - c. \$25,000 to \$35,000
  - d. \$35,000 to \$50,000
  - e. \$50,000 to \$75,000
  - d. over \$75,000
7. What is your mother's current marital status?
  - a. married
  - b. separated/divorced
  - c. widowed
  - d. other

8. What is your father's current marital status?
  - a. married
  - b. separated/divorced
  - c. widowed
  - d. other
9. If your parents were separated/divorced or widowed, how old were you when this occurred?
10. What is your mother's primary occupation?
11. What is your father's primary occupation?
12. what was the highest grade in school or level of education your mother completed?
13. What was the highest grade in school or level of education your father completed?

**ATTACHMENT C: DEBRIEFING LETTER**

Family Experiences and How It Affects Development Study  
Department of Psychology

Thanks for your participation in this study. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects and influences of one's locus of control and family social environment upon psychological separation. Psychological separation is an important developmental task that effects young adult functioning, and it is believed that the family influences and an individual's locus of control strongly influence this process.

Because we are still handing out the questionnaires, we ask that you please do not share the contents of the study with anybody until it is completed.

Again, thanks for your participation.

Sincerely,

Steve Bo, M.S. Candidate

Ed Teyber, Ph.D.

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